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ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA MOURNS THE LOSS OF MEMBER/ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST AND NOBEL PEACE PRIZE WINNER WANGARI MUTA MAATHAI

Chicago, Illinois - September 27, 2011 - Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority's global network of 260,000 members in 958 chapters worldwide is mourning the loss of Honorary Member, environmental activist and Nobel Peace Prize recipient Wangari Muta Maathai.

"Alpha Kappa Alpha is deeply saddened by the loss of Honorary member Wangari Muta Maathai," said AKA's International President Attorney Carolyn House Stewart. "Dr. Maathai dedicated her life struggling for democracy, human rights and environmental conservation. Her activism, advocacy, vigilance and commitment earned her a Nobel Peace Prize, making her the first African woman to receive the coveted honor. Her lifelong passion to save the environment elevated her to iconic status and made her the world's preeminent environmental steward. Her example inspired Alpha Kappa Alpha to intensify its environmental sustainability mission. We will continue our environmental crusade in tribute to her."

Stewart added that Maathai exhibited true strength and courage in her valiant fight to save the environment, and to promote women's rights, which are two causes that are dear to Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.

In hailing her, Stewart held up Maathai's life as the embodiment of courage and resilience.

Dr. Maathai's journey to greatness began in 1977 when she founded the Green Belt Movement, a grassroots environmental non-governmental organization, which has now planted over 30 million trees across Kenya to prevent soil erosion. She came to be affectionately called "Tree Woman" or "The Tree Mother of Africa."

Her pursuit was dotted with struggles and triumphs. During the regime of President Daniel Arap Moi, she was imprisoned several times and violently attacked for demanding multi-party elections and an end to political corruption and tribal politics. In 1989, Maathai almost singlehandedly saved Nairobi's Uhuru Park by stopping the construction by Moi's business associates of the 60-story Kenya Times Media Trust business complex.

In 2002, Dr. Maathai was elected to Parliament when the National Rainbow Coalition, which she represented, defeated the ruling party Kenya African National Union. She was Assistant Minister in the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Wildlife since 2003. In January 2007, Dr. Maathai hosted the Global Young Greens conference in Nairobi, where more than 120 young delegates of environmental, civil rights, peace, and social justice youth movements as well as youth organizations of green parties from all over the world.

Being presented the Nobel Peace Prize, which she received in 2004, represented the climactic high point of a life spent bettering the lives of others.

Another milestone was being inducted into Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority as an honorary member, the highest honor the Sorority presents. Those who are inducted represent the highest standards of character, courage and womanhood. Dr. Maathai's remarkable achievements made her an ideal candidate. At the time of the formal induction, Maathai expressed humility and said that the only time she felt so uplifted and transformed was when she was baptized. She said she would cherish membership in Alpha Kappa Alpha "for the rest of my life."

"On behalf of our entire membership, we mourn her loss and offer our deepest condolences to her daughters and her granddaughter," said Stewart. "We also extend comfort to the Green Belt Movement and the global environmental network; and to all who admire the type of rare courage that Maathai possessed."